

**Testimony of David P. Nez, Department Director,
Navajo Department of Veteran Affairs.
To the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity,
April 10, 2010**

Good morning Honorable Representative Kirkpatrick, Representative Waters, distinguished veterans, visitors and relatives.

I am David P. Nez. I served for 22 years in the Military, both active and reserved duty combined. During this period of service, I did a tour of duty during the Persian Gulf War. I am also a Vietnam Era Veteran, fortunately or unfortunately, I was too young to have served in country back in 1974. Having served with a military occupational specialty of 11 Bravo; Infantry and 13 Bravo; Artillery, it has been determined that I have lost at least 5% of my hearing upon separation from active duty in 1980 therefore I am 5% disabled, however I am not receiving disability pension by personal choice. I am keenly aware of the problems my comrades, fellow Veterans, face with regard to housing.

I worked with the Navajo Housing Authority for 9 plus years as a Housing Management Director up to Feb. 2010. I am currently employed by the Navajo Nation as the Department Manager for the Navajo Department of Veterans Affairs, a position that is a counterpart to State Directors of Veterans Affairs.

My service and work experience has brought me into a unique position to advocate that, indeed, the Navajo Veterans would greatly benefit from the exclusion of the disability pension in the NAHASDA regulations and qualifying criteria for Veterans housing on the Navajo Nation. Service connected disability compensation should not be deemed as income earned. Your good work in the U.S. Congress to strike this requirement is notable and worthy.

In collaboration with Navajo Housing Authority, the Navajo Veterans Affairs is in the initial phase of developing 11 housing units for Veterans across Navajo Nation. This is based on Veterans applicants that will be determined eligible under the NAHASDA Regulations. At least two of these applicants will be 100% disabled Veterans, with a possibility of another. This is a very conservative estimate.

The Navajo Department of Veterans Affairs will be reviewing further into other avenues to increase the availability of affordable housing for veterans. The provisions under the VA Direct Home Loan program is one such source that has limitations with regard to the Navajo lands being held in "trust status".

On behalf of all Veterans, I thank you and appreciate the opportunity to have spoken with you on these issues. Thank you very much.